

H.B. 5499 protects people from unfair insurance premiums. This bill prohibits insurers from transferring an insured person from standard classification to substandard classification after the policy is issued. It also restricts insurers from increasing premiums due to activity or health status. (PA 03-119)

### Safeguarding your Health Insurance

The General Assembly passed legislation this session that is aimed at increasing accessibility to health insurance for small employers. There are approximately 77,000 Connecticut workers in companies with fewer than 25 employees who do not have access to affordable health insurance. This legislation has added small businesses to the list of those eligible to purchase group hospital, medical, and surgical health insurance under the state nonprofit corporations, not just those with state contracts. Passing this bill helps small business lower costs, increases the number of people who are insured, raises the general level of state health, and helps thousands of employees. (PA 03-149)

### Increasing Access to Health Insurance for Connecticut Workers

Studies show graduated licenses that place limits on new drivers dramatically decrease the potential for tragic automobile accidents. This year, the General Assembly passed legislation that creates graduated licenses for 16 and 17 year olds in an attempt to provide more training for new drivers. This bill increases mandatory safe driving training and limits the number of passengers, and who those passengers may be, during the first six months of licensure. For the first three months, drivers may only transport one passenger who must be either their parent or guardian. For the next three months, in addition, the bill eliminates the separate license for operating a motorcycle and replaces it with a motorcycle endorsement on a regular driver's license. (PA 03-171)

### Limitations On Licensed Motor Vehicle Operators Who Are Sixteen Or Seventeen

## Please Keep in Touch

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### CALL OR WRITE FOR YOUR COPY OF THIS YEAR'S ACTS AFFECTING:

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Major Public Acts
- ☐ Senior Citizens

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Representative Linda Orange

# LINDA



## 48<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

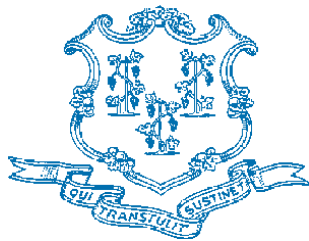
*Colchester  
East Haddam*

# CAPITOL

news

State Representative

# A. ORANGE



*Dear Friends,*

*I am pleased to send you a summary of some of the legislation recently enacted during the regular legislative session.*

*In addition, there is a "Legislative Checklist" that you may send to me to learn more information about a specific topic. Addressing the concerns and interests of my constituents is my number one priority and, as always, I look forward to being of assistance on any issue or concern you may have. Please continue to write or call me at the Capitol or at home.*

*Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice your concerns at the State Capitol. It is an honor to represent you.*

*Sincerely,*

Linda A. Orange



### Stopping the SPAM

Every time you open up your e-mail account there is unsolicited e-mail, or SPAM, in your inbox. Since these are inconvenient, obnoxious, and sometimes rude, we passed SB 332 to prohibit e-mail from being sent to recipients who notify the senders that they don't want to receive it. All advertisement e-mail must have a toll-free phone number or e-mail address to unsubscribe to the sender. If people continue to receive unwanted e-mail, they are permitted to sue the offenders. (PA 03-128)

### Electric Restructuring

With the passage of this important legislation, the General Assembly guaranteed that Connecticut residents would not be subjected to runaway electric prices. With consumers in mind, the General Assembly acted promptly, since "Standard Offer" electric prices would no longer be enforced on December 31, 2003. Without this price protection, residents would have faced skyrocketing electric bills that the average consumer would have had difficulty paying. PA 03-135 continues the Standard Offer price control under a new plan called "Transitional Standard Offer." The new Transitional Standard Offer controls consumers' electric prices by enforcing a cap. Along with this cap, the General Assembly also requires more efficient and cleaner power to be supplied to Connecticut's customers. PA 03-135 is friendly to both the consumer and the environment. It ensures Connecticut residents do not have to fear their lights going out, nor their monthly bills escalating. (PA 03-135)

### More Veterans Qualify for Benefits

Now, veterans who have 90 days of active duty service since August 2, 1990 qualify for a number of veterans' benefits, including property tax exemptions, education assistance, and medical treatment. If your service was in Somalia after December 2, 1992, or Bosnia after December 20, 1995, these benefits were extended to you as well. In the past, veterans had to have served in those countries to qualify. (PA 03-85)

### Higher Income Limits for Optional Veterans' Property Tax Exemption

Currently, cities and towns can provide additional property tax exemptions to veterans and surviving spouses in addition to the one mandated by state law. This year we increased the income eligibility limits for this optional property tax exemption by \$25,000 to \$51,100 for single veterans or a surviving spouse, and \$56,900 for married veterans. The new limits are subject to annual inflation adjustments. Under prior law, the exemption was capped at \$10,000. The new law allows municipalities to raise this exemption to 10% of the property value. (PA 03-44)

### Mercury Emission Control

With a constant eye on Connecticut's air quality, the General Assembly passed legislation this year that requires all coal-burning electric plants to reduce the amount of mercury they emit into our air. The goal of better air quality for all of Connecticut's residents is met by the requirement that all plants must reduce their mercury emissions rate by 90%. (PA 03-72)

### MTBE as a Gasoline Additive

Once thought to be an important part of protecting our environment, MTBE is now a proven contaminant that endangers our health and well-being. Continuing our commitment to a clean and healthy environment, the General Assembly passed legislation that links Connecticut's phase out of MTBE to New York's planned elimination in January. This coordination represents a bold statement from the region that contamination of our environment is not acceptable. (PA 03-122)

### Sick Time Use for Family and Medical Leave

Private-sector employees can now use up to two weeks of accrued paid sick time while on leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Employees may use FMLA to tend to a seriously ill child, spouse or parent, or for the birth or adoption of a child. (PA 03-213)



### Pyrotechnic and Illegal Fireworks

On February 20, 2003 The Station nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island caught fire from a pyrotechnic display. The building was overcrowded and the exits were not clear, thus resulting in one of the five deadliest U.S. nightclub fires of the last fifty years. In order to prevent this from occurring in Connecticut, the General Assembly enacted a law that allows police officers and local fire marshals to order people to leave when there is risk of injury or death due to indoor pyrotechnics, blocked exits or overcrowding. Anyone who violates this order can be fined \$200-\$1,000 and/or face up to six months in prison. The law also specifies that if a building is used for a public gathering an announcement must be made identifying where emergency exits exist and how to access them. All newly constructed or renovated buildings where the public assembles must have a main entrance that is large enough for two-thirds of its occupants to exit through in an emergency. This new law also addresses the illegal use and possession of fireworks. It requires physicians, health care institutions and providers to report firework injuries to the state fire marshal's office within forty-eight hours after treating the injury. Local fire marshals will now be able to seize, remove, store, or dispose of, or cause to have removed any fireworks possessed for use or sale illegally. A person who either injures or causes death from the use of such fireworks faces imprisonment of up to ten years and/or a fine up to \$10,000. (PA 03-231)

### Public Health Emergency Response Authority

The General Assembly has worked hard to pass legislation that will increase the preparedness of the state in the event of a public health emergency, namely a bio-terrorism attack. With legislative approval, the governor may declare a 'Public Health Emergency' which includes outbreaks of communicable diseases and contamination from bio-terrorist toxins as well as from chemical, nuclear or other substances if the disease or substance poses a substantial risk of a significant number of fatalities or injuries to the public. This legislation also provides authorization to the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health to quarantine, isolate, and vaccinate people during a 'Public Health Emergency.' However, safeguards have been built in to allow individuals to refuse vaccination for any reason, including on medical, religious, or conscientious grounds, and allows those who do so to be quarantined or isolated. This bill also requires the Commissioner to establish a Public Health Preparedness Advisory Committee to develop a plan to respond to a public health emergency. (PA 03-236)



### Extending Municipal Benefits to Local Volunteers

Any town or city that provides health, accident and hospital benefits for its employees now has the ability to provide these same benefits for active members of their volunteer fire departments and ambulance services. (PA 03-254)